AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

HINGHAM,.

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUEST OF A NUMBER OF THE INHABITANTS,

ON Saturday, THE 22d OF FEBRUARY, 1800,

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH,

AND THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE *UNITED STATES*,

FOR PUBLIC *NATIONAL MOURNING*,

FOR THE *DEATH*

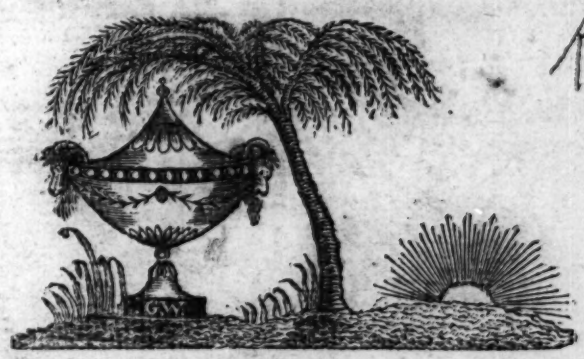
OF THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY,

AND FRIEND OF MANKIND,

General George Washington.

BY *HENRY MAURICE LISLE*,

Attorney at Law,



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1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

HINGHAM, FEB. 24th, 1800.

SIR,

THE Committee of Arrangements for the observance, at the Derby Hall, of the twenty second of February, the day set apart for testimonials of national grief, for the loss sustained by the death of our much beloved WASHINGTON, present you their thanks for your excellent oration, delivered on that day, and request a copy for the press. I am, Sir, with respect, yonr obedient, humble servant,

THOMAS LORING, *Chairman.*

HENRY M. LISLE, Esq.

HINGHAM, FEB. 24th, 1800.

SIR,

THE inference, from your letter, that I have performed the honourable duty that was assigned me, in a manner satisfactory to the Committee of Arrangements, for the twenty second instant, affords me the most grateful sensations.

Sensible that the defects of my composition, which the partial ear of friendship may not have regarded, will not escape unnoticed the penetrative eye of criticism, with timidity I comply with your request, in submitting a copy of my oration for the press. I am, Sir, with esteem, your obedient servant,

HENRY M. LISLE.

The Chairman of the Committee.

AN ORATION, &c.

MY MUCH RESPECTED FRIENDS,
AND FELLOW TOWNSMEN,

IN compliance with the recommendation of the government, and the dictates of our feelings, we have, this day assembled publicly to testify our grateful sensibility of the blessings conferred upon us through the instrumentality of the illustrious, but, alas! deceased WASHINGTON; by commemorating the glorious exploits he achieved, faithfully narrating the virtues that adorned, and rendered him exemplary; and by every other mean in our power, paying that tribute to departed excellence, which pre-eminent merit, like his, so justly claims.

SELECTED by you, my friends, to the discharge of a part of the honourable duties of the day, though truly sensible of the dignity conferred upon me, I yet address you with the utmost diffidence, from a conviction of my inadequacy to discharge the task assigned me, in a manner which the important and melancholy subject requires—a subject which harrows the feelings of the soul, awakens the sensibility, and calls forth the chrystal drop of sorrow from the eye of every friend of Columbia.

THE preceding anniversaries of this day, with our land clothed in the garb of conviviality, have been dedicated to *Comus*.—United America, even some of us now present, have annually assembled to observe the day as an holiday, devoting it to festivity, and crowning it with hilarity ; our countenances have been animated with the glow of refined satisfaction, and our eyes sparkled with the effulgent lustre of ineffable gratification, whilst due panegyric was bestowed on WASHINGTON by recounting his magnanimity as a hero, his ability as a politician, his sagacity as a statesman, his generosity and benevolence as a man.

" Proud of his birth, we boast the auspicious year,
Struck with his fall, we shed a general tear."

THE revolved year has presented us another anniversary of the birth of the man " first in war, first in peace, and first in the affections of the people ;" but it at the same time presents us with a *sad reverse* to what it has heretofore brought—instead of the timbrels of joy, we now hear the voice of woe ; the habiliment of pleasure is exchanged for the cypress badge of mourning. Americans have again convened, not to honour WASHINGTON *living*,but to reverence him *dead*, and do homage to his memory—instead of hilarity, we are now called to exhibit grief ; in the room of festivity,sorrow ; the countenances that were brightened by gladness, are *now* clouded with a melancholic gloom ; the eye which sparkled at his name is *now* bedim'd with tears for his death, and the tongue that echoed his praise made mute with affliction.

DID I possess to Ciceronian extent the power of eloquence, or the ability of an AMES, with some effect might I attempt a deliniation of his character ; but impressed as

the purity of it must be on your minds, it cannot be more necessary than for me to endeavour

> " To guard a title that was rich before ;
> To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet ;
> To smooth the ice, or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow : or with taper-light
> To seek the beauteons eye of heaven to garnish ;
> For *all* were idle and ridiculous excess."

YOUR expectations, however, my friends, no doubt, require that some recital of his deeds should be rendered you ; nor do I presume that a minute narration of them from his cradle to his sepulchre, would be tedious or uninteresting ; but to expatiate on his great actions, *volumes* would be requisite. It has been suggested to me, as the particulars of his advanced years and public career are engraved on your memories, to impart to you more immediately the scenes of his early life, I might have in my power to communicate : In so doing, cursorily remarking the former, and avoiding by language hyperbolical comparing him in perfection to Deity itself, and yet confering upon him my feeble effort of eulogy, in reverencing him as an il-

lustrious, excellent, and singularly beneficial man, consist, I conceive, the essential parts of my duty.

WHEN the unfortunate monarch, *Charles* the first, was decapitated in England, and usurpation sat on the throne, the ancestors of your deceased Father and Friend, in order to escape the iron hand of persecution, and rigorous distresses their loyalty exposed them to, fled to Virginia, as an asylum from oppression. The parish now called Washington, in the county of Westmoreland, was the place of the nativity, and the eleventh of February (old style) 1732 (this day sixty eight years agone) the auspicious birth-day of your political saviour. The intervening years, between puerility and manhood, he devoted (we are informed) with close application to study, in order to compensate the want of advantages his natal state could not at that period afford him—not failing with assiduity to cultivate the strong powers of mind nature had liberally endowed him with, with consequently additional honour to himself, we have experienced him in the field of science, the chaste and correct speaker, the elegant and erudite composuist.

HOSTILE intentions having been manifested by the natives, and French settlers on the Ohio, towards the peaceable inhabitants of Virginia, by seizing, plundering, aud otherwise maltreating those of them they could surprise or entice by stratagem into their power, the government resolved that an envoy, bearing a remonstrance against their oppression, injustice, and cruelty, should be dispatched to the French commandant. On this hazardous and toilsome, as well as important mission, it was truly expedient that a man of the utmost intrepidity, prudence, and wisdom should be sent. Major WASHINGTON (but then twenty-one years of age) was selected as possessing the combination of talents requisite to effect their momentous object, the reinstation of tranquility and good order, either by the persuasion of his eloquence, or the prowess of his arms—his great soul, unaffected by danger, accepted the appointment.—At the most inclement season of the year, the man who afterwards led legions to victory and established the independence of his country, carrying his provisions on his back, and accompanied with but a few attendants, travelled on this

perilous enterprize the distance of four hundred miles, the major part of which lay through a wilderness inhabited only by inhuman savages, or predatory beasts.

PACIFIC measures proved ineffectual, and the desired object, peaceable enjoyment of rights, was to be obtained only by the effect of force.

BEHOLD, for the first time, your WASHINGTON in arms! at the immature age of two and twenty, with the commission of a colonel, at the head of a small band encountering and overcoming a party from the entrenched enemy of fort du Quesne. Victory propitiously crowned her favourite son, and thence-forward made him her peculiar care: the mortified *D'Villier*, enraged at the success of a stripling, resolved by opposing with treble force, to strip the laurels from the brow of the juvenile conqueror, and retrieve the fame he had ingloriously lost. Though *thus* attacked, the valiant WASHINGTON, befriended by an incomplete breastwork hastily thrown up, and appropriately named "*Fort Necessity*," made so vigorous a defence that the humbled enemy were compelled to the

indispensableness of offering terms, the magnanimous victor could not but accede to.

SOLIDITY of thought, and sapiency of expression, as well as the brilliancy of his military talents, were, in early life, prognostics of his future greatness.

THE brave, but indiscreet and rash *Braddock*, too late repented the disdain with which he treated the council of WASHINGTON: in neglecting his advice he not only sacrificed his own, but the lives of his valiant troops, to the insatiable revenge of the French, and unrelenting barbarity of savages. On that ill-fated day, non-attendance to the instruction of your hero ensanguined the banks of the Monongahela, and afforded numberless victims to the point of the bayonet and edge of the tomahawk; though midst the din of battle, and the yell of savages, WASHINGTON, calm and collected, by his prudence saved what temerity had lost, by effecting a retreat, and retrieving from slaughter the remnant of a defeated army.

WITH increasing years he grew in the cordial affection of his fellow citizens, who

afforded him the most evident proof of the very high and honorable estimation they held him in, by electing him a delegate to the first American Congress; in which capacity he rendered them the utmost satisfaction, and at the same time added such dignity to himself, that when violation seized the rights of your country, and invasion impending, it became necessary to oppose in arms what you deemed impositions in Britain. WASHINGTON, in the meridian of life, had so far the confidence of his country, obtained by his virtue, that Congress unanimously elected him on the fifteenth of June, 1775, the general and commander in chief of the continental forces.—*Propitious day!* on its decision, my friends, probably depended the glory, the happiness, the *Independence* of America. Few (if any) were to be found at that time so calculated, so capable as he, to maintain your rights; to secure your liberties: it consisted not in either martial skill, wisdom, or bravery alone; the co-efficience of these and other talents was requisite to effect the glorious end—such talents were found concentrated in WASHINGTON.—Forsaking ease for toil, stimulated by the ardor

of patriotism, and the enthusiastic glow of freedom, he exposed himself to every danger for our sakes, nobly disclaiming the just pretensions he had to pecuniary emolument, and relying solely for compensation on the reflections he was to enjoy in the consideration of having served his country, and receiving her grateful benedictions.—Although the situation of the government presented itself to his imagination in characters not less deplorable than true ; a government without funds to support or defray the expences of a dubious war ; without an ally to encourage or aid it ; and then without credit abroad ; though life seemed to him as it were dependant on the cast of a die ; assured that should Britain prove victorious in the contest, and he even escape unhurt from the perils of war, an ignominious death must be his doom ; unaffected by all, and relying on protective providence, with the greatest diffidence he acquainted Congress " that he accepted the high appointment, that he felt the greatest distress from a consciousness that his abilities and military experience, were not equal to the extensive and important trust."—Assured of his ability, his want

of confidence in himself, served but to convince them, that

"Merit is ever modest.
And that it is the witness still of excellence,
To put a strange face on its own perfection."

CAN it be necessary for me to recall to your remembrance, with what satisfaction you beheld him unsheathe his sword, devoted to the cause of liberty, on the heights of Dorchester? and with what enraptured expectation you looked up to *him* as the hero who was to conduct you to future glory? or shall I depict to you his army, at times, in the most inclement seasons, without fuel, exposed to the severity of the weather, without cloathing to screen them from the piercing borean blasts, or provisions to sustain them from the hard gripe of famine. Tho' his feelings, as a *man*, were affected to behold his troops thus exposed—as a *general*, his wisdom and resolution were requisite to nip faction in its bud, and quiet the dissentious and discontented of his army, who encouraged by his paternal-like persuasion, and his great example, or intimidated and awed by his determinate and dignified deportment, supported the horrors that surround-

ed them with patience, and endured the sufferings they underwent with fortitude.

TO recount, minutely, his successes and his services, appertains to the historian and biographer: necessarily confined to the limits of a few pages, it is impracticable for n to expatiate on them.

ARE they not indelibly engraved on your minds?—if not, the mention of the *Jerseys*, *Trenton*, *Monmouth*, *Princeton* and *York* alone is sufficient to present them, as well as the painful scenes he passed, to your imaginations, or to behold, with considerate view, at their respective seasons, your fields adorned in the verdant livery of spring, or rich with the golden harvest of Pomona, to reflect on the social pleasures of your fire-sides—your domestic joys—the security of your altars from violation—or to observe wafted to our shores, by every gale, on the wings of commerce, the product of every clime, purchased by our indigenous resources, cannot fail attracting our contemplation, and demanding our gratitude to him, so conducive (with the co-operation of his brave associates) in procuring us those invaluable blessings.

PROTECTED by an eternal over-ruling providence, the political ark in which you had embarked your reliance for liberty, withstood the tempestuous flood that threatened its destruction, and preserved itself until the assurance that the commotions had subsided was certified indubitably by the presentment of the olive branch.

THE smiles of Concordia succeeding the frowns of blood-stained Mars, the American leader (though indirectly urged) did not, like the presumptuous *self-titled* "*Washington of Italy*,"* turn the very arms his country had placed in his power, against her councils, in order to subvert her system, and procure himself a Consulship, or any other dignified station, or emolumentary aggrandizement; but to his usmost wish, requited in having established her independence, converting his no longer needed sword into a pruning hook, with satisfaction resigned into the hands of Congress the high commission he had received from them with diffidence; and covered with unfading honours, retired from the tumultuous field of battle, to the peaceful shades of Mount Vernon.

* Buonaparte

THE predictions of his horoscope, not yet fully confirmed, Columbia's genius happily directed to, and benignantly bore him, the invitation of unanimous suffrage to his administration of that system of government, which in convention as well as war he had laboured to establish. Private inducements had no attraction, when summoned by the call of his country. Seated in the presidential chair, his unremitted exertions were used for the promotion of your best interests, in adopting salutary laws, wisely preserving you from active measures in a war unprecedented amongst civilized powers: and, though difficult the task, reconciling the irritated passions, and retaining peace at home. Conciliating all parties, he diffused universal happiness; and though assailed by the envenomed tongue of envy, aided by the scrutinizing "microscopic eye" of scandal, detraction could never tarnish the medallion of his life, for in searching for his *invisible imperfections*, his virtue, like the bright blaze of the sun, on examination for its macula, dazzled our sight, and shone with redoubled splendour.

AFTER serving his country, in war and peace for five and forty years, magnanimously correspondent with his antecedent deeds, he forsook the fascinating charms of power; and bestowing his invaluable advice and affectionate valedictory address, couched in language of a parent, solicitous for the future welfare of his progeny—retired from her service to devote his remaining years to offices, better adapted to declining nature; participating in private the public felicity, enjoying the possession of domestic happiness, dispensing goodness, and preparing himself for an eternal separation from terrestrial scenes, for an introduction to a future world.

THOUGH protected on shore, our rights became invaded and our flag insulted at sea; our mariners were wantonly and inhumanly murdered, and our respectable and extensive commerce threatened with total annihilation. Repulsion was the resolve, "*millions* for defence, not a *cent* for tribute," the unfeigned language of every American. Our navy was constructed, our military arranged, and our glorious heroic veteran again resorted to, as the rock of our salvation and the hope of

our defence. Self-devoted to his country, to the very close of life, he accepted (disdaining etiquette) the command of the army from his patriotic brother, who fills the exalted station himself had so lately honoured, and was again preparing to marshal his troops, and expose himself at their head, should occasion require it, when the hour decreed by inexplicable providence arrived, the sad event of which all America this day deplores. For, though WASHINGTON was illustrious, still WASHINGTON was mortal; the divine power that pre-ordained his birth, and made him his chief instrument in emancipating America, and by coincidence of circumstances rendered him highly honoured and revered, who had endeared him to the world, and attached him to liberty, though he *eternalized* his fame, had not *immortalized* his body, but decreed that he should pay the same great debt to nature, that we each now owe.——Attacked by a rapid and painful disease, the aid of science proved unavailing.——

THE melancholy part of my duty requires me with reverence to withdraw the

curtain from the bed of his dissolution, and present to your imaginations your WASHINGTON in the hour of death; though sensible that the thread of life must soon be severed, still mindful of his country, imploring the blessings of heaven upon it, and acquainting his afflicted consort and friends "that his public business was but two days behind hand,"——possessed of an unaccusing conscience, perfectly resigned, and prepared to meet his GOD, he expired without a struggle; and,

"Now to the Almighty Father's presence join'd,
He takes his rank in glory and in bliss
Amid the human worthies. Glad around
Crowd his compatriot shades, and point him out
With pride, *Columbia's blameless boast.*"

THOUGH

"Universal worth lament a patron lost,
Yet let us, grateful, joy
That we such virtues knew, such virtues felt;
And feel them still, teaching our views to rise
Through ever bright'ning scenes of future worlds."

And hark! the voice of consolation tells,
Adams still lives; tho' *Washington* be dead.

PENETRATED by the shaft of affliction, millions, besides us, my friends, have, on

this day, assembled to venerate WASHINGTON; and, pleasing reflection! with such sensations that was their power extensive as their sensibility, (to adopt the language of a native bard) their gratitude had decreed, that

"His glorious life a volume should compose,
As Alps immortal, spotless as its snows.
The Stars should be its Types—its Press the Age;
The Earth its Binding—and the Sky its Page.
In *language* set, not Babel could o'erturn;
On *leaves* impressed, which Omar could not *burn*;
The sacred work in heaven's high dome should stand,
Shine with its suns, and with its arch expand;
Till *Nature's* self the Vandal torch should raise,
And the vast *alcove* of creation blaze."

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